



NU-JAZZ

By Tom Sheriff

What is it?

Drawing on the material of late 60s - early 70s jazz-fusion heroes like Jimmy Smith and the Blue Note label roster, African and Latin music's, the funk of James Brown, plus elements of drum 'n' bass, soul and hip-hop, we have Nu-Jazz - or, as Barry Dust (founder of Askew, Brighton's only dedicated night to this sleeping giant of a dancefloor phenomenon) terms it, Broken Beat. It's jazz with off-kilter rhythmic structure you can dance to. Often the result of dazzling programming, it's intoxicatingly all over the shop.

Where does it come from?

Some jazz is thoughtful, indulgent and arse-numbing, and this is the popular conception amongst the majority. But, a lot of it has ferocious groove, and it is this that oils the heels of Nu-Jazz freaks. Evolving from the radio friendly Acid Jazz and Talkin' Loud output, the inspiration of Gilles Peterson and West London d 'n' b producers like Bugz In The Attic and 4 Hero growing cold to the dirty noise that was soiling their scene, 'The Nuge' (pron: 'nyewj') as it is affectionately bandied about town, owes its current emergence due to a flood of top discs from the States, Japan, Germany, Italy and Scandinavia in recent times, illustrating a global nature to what still remains an underground scene.

What's it doing in Brighton?

Considering our home by the sea includes a good many discerning dancefloor boffins quick to see the potential of a new sound, and that there are committed Brighton labels here in Mr. Bongo and Disorient, *and* that Phonic Hoop's Rob Luis was attempting to fill floors with it at 'The Wig' six years ago, *aaaand* that Russ Dewbury's Jazz Rooms is the longest running jazz-dance club in the *world*, for fuck's sake, it's remarkable that Brighton hasn't quite yet got the Nu-Jazz message. But it will, when Askew and Jazz Room regulars have alternatives to attend, which will happen. The rise in Electroclash nights from one to eight million-and-one since Christmas is testament to the entrepreneurial prowess of those in this manor charged by a thrilling new clubbing possibility. Live Nu- Jazz acts from Brighton are a mite thin on the ground, though - Mr. Hermano, Bazeado and Bah Samba remaining the most visible.

Where does it go from here?

Barry Dust feels that the Brighton scene is currently at the stage that the movement's West London spiritual centre was at two years ago. Carnival Collective collaborator Dave Tribe (once of Dewbury-managed, Norman Cook-produced Wayne Foundation) has been watching this develop in Brighton as musician and DJ for 20 years, and feels that it will explode next year, approaching the boil, this. It's a snobbery-free, timeless music, he feels, that offers a more challenging, but none less beat-stuffed clubbing experience that Brighton normally embraces. It's a matter of syncopation.

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(Part of a larger, multi-contributor feature examining key elements of Brighton's music scene.)